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ABSTRACT

Instrument instruction provided by local authorities has contributed to musical activities in primary and secondary schools for many years. A national survey asked the following questions: How much musical instrumental instruction goes on now in Scottish schools?; Are the numbers of pupils and instructors rising or falling?; How much do the local authorities spend on these services?; and How many charge fees? This paper uses the results of the survey requested by the Scottish Office and sent to all 32 Scottish local authorities to report on patterns of change and their implications. The paper draws some general conclusions from the survey, namely: the number of pupils receiving instruction appears to be holding steady; services are still being provided; a fairly healthy range of musical activity is taking place; but, it cannot be denied that there have been pressures on instrumental services. Contains 4 tables and 40 references. (BT)

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SCRE Spotlights
From The Scottish Council for Research in Education
73

# Musical Instrument Instruction in Scottish Local Authorities

John Hall, The Scottish Council for Research in Education

*Instrument instruction provided by local authorities has contributed to musical activities in primary and secondary schools for many years. How much musical instrumental instruction goes on now in Scottish schools? Are numbers of pupils and instructors rising or falling? How much do the local authorities spend on these services? How many charge fees? This paper uses the results of a national survey requested by the Scottish Office to report on patterns of change and their implications. It poses questions which still need to be addressed if we are to understand how musical experience may affect pupils' achievement and behaviour.*

Learning to play a musical instrument and participating in music making are major non-statutory enhancements of the school experience for thousands of pupils. Primary school teachers and secondary school music departments play a vital role in musical education, but this Spotlight is specifically about the contribution made by instrumental music services provided by local authorities. These exist in all education authorities in Scotland and provide the instructors who teach young people to play their musical instruments. They also arrange a variety of activities, including music camps and regional orchestras, which bring the young musicians together to play. Reported and discussed here are the results of a survey of all Scottish education authorities. The survey was conducted in 1998 and asked about musical instrument instruction provided by the authorities since local government reorganisation in 1996.

## Background to the survey

Music making has intrinsic cultural and aesthetic value and a range of recent research has suggested that participating in music can also enhance the literacy and numeracy attainment of pupils, and improve behaviour and motivation (Edwards, 1996; Gardiner *et al*, 1996; Music Industry Association, 1998). There has been world-wide research

## Musical instrument instruction, where do we stand?

The number of pupils receiving musical instruction appears to be holding steady, services are still being provided and a fairly healthy range of musical activity is taking place. However, it cannot be denied that there have been pressures on instrumental services. The number of instructors employed declined over the period covered by the survey, and there has been a slight decline in the FTE of instructors employed. There has been a rise in the number of authorities charging fees, and a general rise in the level of fees. It is not yet clear what impact this will have in the longer term.


- Schools, Pupils, Activities, Instruments & Instructors
  *... see pages 2/3/4*
- Budgets, Fees & Charging
  *... see pages 4/5*
- Bibliography & References *... see pages 7/8*
- Conclusions, Discussion & Unanswered Questions
  - *provision and take up*
  - *social justice*
  - *management of services ... see pages 5/6*

interest in the impact that music and music-making can have on achievement and behaviour. There has also been a healthy level of local interest within Scotland, with a number of research papers and MEd theses addressing these topics in recent years (see the references at the end of this paper).

For some time now there has been widespread concern, throughout the United Kingdom, that instrumental instruction services have been under financial (and other) pressures which have diminished the service which they can offer to schools and pupils. Surveys commissioned by the Arts Council of England and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Coopers and Lybrand / MORI, 1994), and others conducted by the *Times Educational Supplement* (*TES*, 1995, 1998a, 1998b), the Heads of Instrumental Teaching, Scotland (HITS, 1994) and by Everitt (1997), all paint a fairly gloomy picture of falling budgets, fewer instructors and lower levels of provision, although none of these surveys can be said to be truly comprehensive and authoritative, especially about the position in Scotland. Indeed, very little exact information has been available. Cope and Smith commented in 1997 that 'so far as we have been able to determine, official data for instrumental instruction does not presently exist for Scotland as a whole' (Cope and Smith, 1997).

The most recent surveys, by the *Times Educational Supplement* in April and July 1998, noted with regard to Scotland that 'more than a third of children in Scotland received free music tuition, with most schools introducing charges only in the last year' however, 'they are less likely than their counterparts in Wales and Northern Ireland to be considered for subsidies if their families cannot afford to pay' (separate figures for the constituent nations of the UK were not given in the report). This was based on returns from only 83 Scottish primary schools who were included in a UK-wide survey (*TES*, 1998a). In July 1998 the second *TES* survey, which included data from 19 (out of 32) Scottish authorities, found that in Scotland:

> Nearly one in six (16%) of pupils had weekly lessons – the highest in Britain.
>
> The average charge was £38.30 per term.
>
> More than a quarter of pupils had subsidised lessons. (*TES*, 1998b)

The introduction of fees for instrumental tuition and the reorganisation of local government have been two major changes affecting instrumental services. A number of authorities have begun to levy fees from pupils receiving instruction. There has been some worry that this number is growing and that the level of fees is rising. The reorganisation of local government in Scotland in 1995 also led to some uncertainty about current levels of provision in Scotland. The abolition of the twelve former regional and island authorities and their replacement with 32 new local authorities led to a redistribution of responsibility for providing instrument instruction. By 1998 there was no clear picture of what was being provided, how much of it there was, what trends there were in provision and whether it was being charged for. It was to answer these questions that SCRE was asked to conduct a survey of all Scottish local authorities.

## The SCRE Survey

### *Information Collection*

A questionnaire was sent to all 32 Scottish local authorities and was completed and returned by 29 in August and September 1998. The respondents were asked a range of questions about access to music instruction, instruments covered, numbers of instructors, budgets and fees. The questions asked for retrospective details of the last two years (1996–97 and 1997–98) and prospective forecasts for the current year (1998–99).

Total numbers of primary and secondary pupils in each authority ranged from 4105 to 78464 (1997–98 figures). It is clear that the authorities vary widely in both population and geographical extent and comparisons between authorities are not easy.

### *Findings:* Schools and Pupils

Thirteen authorities made musical instrument instruction available to pupils in all of their primary schools. In others the coverage ranged from 36% to 88% of primary schools. Twenty-eight authorities covered all of their secondary schools. The single exception to full secondary school coverage among



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those who responded was an authority with what they described as 'geographic and demographic' problems. This authority provided coverage in 80% of secondary schools.

In total, there were 36,783 pupils in 20 authorities receiving musical instrument instruction in 1996–97; 44,150 in 24 authorities in 1997–98; and 40,181 in 22 authorities in 1998–99. Not all authorities were able to provide figures for every year.

The percentage of the school population which participated in musical instrument instruction varied greatly between authorities. In 1996–97 participation rates ranged from 3.9% to 9.5% (20 authorities provided figures); in 1997–98 it was 3.3%–15.6% (24 authorities); and in 1998–99, 3.3%–10.3% (22 authorities). In each of the years, half of all authorities fell within the range 5%–8%. The numbers of pupils participating had increased in fourteen authorities and decreased in six.

Information on the numbers of applications for instruction was not sought, but one respondent commented that 'demand for instrumental lessons will almost always be greater than provision will allow' and two others referred to 'waiting lists' or 'reserve lists' which they maintained. Given this, it was not surprising to find that 26 authorities had procedures for selecting pupils for instruction. Twenty-two authorities used some form of test of musical aptitude. Eleven consulted the pupils' teachers. Factors such as motivation, likely perseverance, and physical suitability for the instrument were also taken into account.

### *Findings:* Activities and Instruments

Twenty-six of the authorities provided some form of out-of-school musical activity such as music centres, music camps, or residential courses and there was a large variety of different types of band and orchestra mentioned by respondents. These included string, brass, woodwind, pipe, fiddle and clarsach ensembles as well as full orchestras and choirs. As Table 1 shows, strings, woodwind, brass and percussion instruments are the most widely available, and they are more likely to be available to pupils in secondary schools than primary schools. Fewer authorities offer the other instruments listed. Instruments not listed in the questionnaire, but mentioned by authorities, included clarsach (7), traditional fiddle (1), and recorder (1).

### *Findings:* Instrumental Instructors

Authorities vary in the numbers of instructors they employ, as might be expected given the differences in size and population. The full-time equivalent (FTE) number of instructors employed per authority varied from 5.6 to 58.7 instructors in 1998–99. The total number of instructors employed in the 29 authorities which responded to the questionnaire declined from 826 in 1996–97 to 787 in 1997–98 and in 1998–99. The total FTE in the 28 authorities responding to this question was 606.1 in 1996–97, 579.8 in 1997–98, and 571.4 in 1998–99. One authority could not provide FTE figures. Again, this shows a slight decline in the period covered by the survey. It is also considerably fewer than the 690 FTE reported by HITS in 1993 (HITS, 1993).

*Table 1: Number of authorities offering tuition in various instruments:*

| | Primary Schools | | | Secondary Schools | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1996–97 | 1997–98 | 1998–99 | 1996–97 | 1997–98 | 1998–99 |
| Strings | 28 | 28 | 28 | 28 | 28 | 28 |
| Woodwind | 24 | 24 | 26 | 29 | 29 | 29 |
| Brass | 28 | 28 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 29 |
| Piano | 14 | 15 | 15 | 19 | 19 | 19 |
| Keyboard | 9 | 8 | 10 | 15 | 15 | 16 |
| Guitar | 8 | 8 | 10 | 22 | 23 | 23 |
| Percussion | 4 | 5 | 6 | 27 | 27 | 27 |
| Bagpipes | 12 | 14 | 14 | 15 | 14 | 15 |
| Voice | 8 | 8 | 8 | 15 | 14 | 14 |





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*Table 2: Number of music pupils per FTE instructor*

| Year | Pupils: FTE instructor | Inter-quartile range | Mean (per authority) | Median (per authority) | Authorities responding |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1996–97 | 47 to 185 | 56.7 to 94.2 | 81.7 | 76.2 | 20 |
| 1997–98 | 38 to 203 | 64.6 to 99.6 | 84.7 | 77.9 | 24 |
| 1998–99 | 38 to 203 | 64.1 to 105.2 | 86.0 | 71.6 | 22 |

The ratio of music pupils to instructors also varies between authorities, as shown in Table 2 above. There are extreme cases, and the inter-quartile ranges show a narrower spread (the inter-quartile range is such that 25% of responses lie below the lower figure, 50% lie between the two figures, and 25% lie above the higher figure). However even the inter-quartile ranges confirm the differences in levels of provision which exist in different places, with instructors in some areas apparently being asked to teach many more pupils than in others.

Some of the difference may be accounted for by geographic and demographic factors (densely populated urban areas versus sparsely populated rural areas). What we do not know is the extent to which these differences may be accounted for by differing emphases on individual or small group instruction in different authorities. We did not ask this question and so have no information from the authorities on whether they concentrated on individual or group instruction.

### *Findings:* Budgets

Budgets for instrumental music services naturally vary with the size of the authority. In 1998–99 budgets ranged from £143,000 to £1,384,600. Comparisons are easier using per capita figures (on the basis of the budget divided by the total number of pupils in the authority), as shown in Table 3 below.

The authority with the highest per capita budget in each of these years has particular geographical problems which may account for the high cost of provision. The next highest per capita budgets in each year are:

1996–97 = £30
1997–98 = £31
1998–99 = £33

This narrows the range considerably but still reveals large differences between authorities.

Higher per capita spending correlates with lower fees, higher percentage take-up of music instruction by pupils, a higher number of FTE music instructors, and higher spending per music pupil. There is also a tendency for higher per capita spending to be associated with a lower ratio between the total number of pupils in the authority and numbers of FTE instructors (ie fewer pupils per instructor). The correlations tend to be low, and there are no doubt a number of independent factors which affect the relationship between these variables, but the relationships do exist.

Three local authorities reported a drop in budget between 1996–97 and 1997–98. A different four local authorities reported a drop in budget between 1997–98 and 1998–99. In other cases, the budgets rose.

*Table 3: Per capita budgets for instrumental services*

| Year | Per Capita Budget (Range) | Inter-quartile range | Mean (per authority) | Median (per authority) | Authorities responding |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1996–97 | £9.43 to £88.85 | £14.58 to £19.51 | £21.23 | £17.76 | 22 |
| 1997–98 | £9.39 to £88.03 | £16.48 to £21.65 | £22.12 | £18.87 | 24 |
| 1998–99 | £10.37 to £94.28 | £16.94 to £22.98 | £23.26 | £19.29 | 21 |

### *Findings:* Fees

In 1996–97 fifteen local authorities were charging fees for musical instrument instruction. By 1998–99 this had risen to eighteen. In ten authorities charges rose over this period. The details of these fees are shown in Table 4 below. These are maximum fee levels as many authorities waive or reduce fees for those receiving income support or other benefits, or for families where two or more siblings receive musical instrument instruction. The fee structures in some local authorities were very complex, with different charges for group or individual instruction and various levels of concession. There were no charges for those pupils who were studying towards an SQA examination or module (Standard Grade, Higher Grade or National Certificate).

*Table 4: Maximum fee levels*

| Year | Maximum fee per annum (Range) | Inter-quartile range | Mean (per authority) | Median (per authority) | Authorities responding |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1996–97 | £15 to £180 | £42 to £100 | £77.57 | £78.00 | 14 |
| 1997–98 | £40 to £180 | £75 to £100 | £97.70 | £80.00 | 17 |
| 1998–99 | £40 to £228 | £79 to £118 | £103.17 | £80.00 | 19 |

## *CONCLUSIONS and DISCUSSION*

### The Impact of Charging

There is no simple pattern which emerges from the data to reveal the impact of fees. There is a very slight tendency for the percentage of the school population receiving music instruction to be lower in local authorities where fees are higher. However the correlation is very low ($r = -0.23$) and there are large variations between authorities. In the three authorities which introduced fees in the period covered by the survey, participation rose in one, and fell in two, and respondents in these authorities differed in their perceptions of the impact.

In the ten authorities which had increased their fees over the period covered by the survey, six reported increases in the numbers of pupils receiving instruction, three reported decreases and one did not provide figures.

One respondent in an authority reported anecdotal evidence of a drop in the number of applications for instruction, and an increased tendency for Standard or Higher Grade pupils to drop out of musical activities after they completed their exams and became eligible to pay fees. This respondent also suggested that fees particularly affected those families who were just above the income level where they would qualify for fee remission. Whether these impacts exist and, if so, whether they are equally apparent across the country will have to remain for future research to determine.

Any impact of charges may be masked by several factors. These include:

- the reluctance of some families to admit that finance is a problem
- the limited supply of instructional places hiding a drop in demand (since the demand for places is always greater than the supply, a drop in demand may make little impact on the number of participants)
- the differential impact of charging on families in differing economic circumstances.

### General Conclusions

Some general conclusions can be drawn from the information gathered in this survey. The number of pupils receiving instruction appears to be holding steady, services are still being provided and a fairly healthy range of musical activity is taking place – and so the worst fears of some earlier commentators are not being realised.

However, it cannot be denied that there have been pressures on instrumental services. The number of instructors employed declined over the period covered by the survey, and there has been a slight decline in the FTE of instructors employed. There has been a rise in the number of authorities charging fees, and a general rise in the level of fees. It is not yet clear what impact this will have in the longer term.

Research into music education continues to attract interest and we will no doubt learn more in the future. At the time of writing this paper (July 1999) the Department for Education and Employment has just commissioned a survey of provision of musical instrument instruction in England and Wales, and the British Educational Research Association (BERA) has announced a conference on research in music education and plans to produce a literature review mapping music education research in the UK (BERA, 1999). Within Scotland, over the last few years, there has been a steady stream of work by individual researchers, working towards MEd degrees or simply out of interest and commitment, and there is no reason to expect that this will cease.

## Unanswered Questions

There are quite a few unanswered questions left. Still to be addressed are questions about:

> Provision and take-up; drop outs at various ages and stages; teaching methods; types of provision (types of music and types of activity); and the effectiveness of teaching.

To these we can add questions about social justice:

> What is the social mix among the pupils who take up musical instruments, and does it differ in different parts of the country?
>
> What is the gender balance?
>
> Are pupils with special needs catered for?
>
> Are the selection procedures being used the most effective and fair?

We cannot ignore the educational impact of the social interactions provided by musical activities and there seems a sound case to be made, on educational as well as egalitarian grounds, that these should be wider rather than narrower.

Further questions relate to the management of services:

> Is there a quality assurance system?
>
> Are there guidelines for the employment of staff?
>
> Is there a promotion structure?
>
> What about the provision of resource centres, music libraries and technicians?
>
> Which of these things is needed, and which is the highest priority?
>
> Is the instrumental service simply a managed service for the authority or does it have a role to play in providing advice to schools?
>
> What is, and what should be, the relationship between the instrumental service and schools?
>
> And what about the wider community?
>
> In an age of lifelong learning are instrumental services only for school pupils?

While this survey has shown that there are clear differences in provision and participation between different parts of the country, we cannot yet identify the factors which influence these differences. Nevertheless we now have a basic sketch map of a territory, a starting point for future exploration, whereas before we could only speculate about the terrain.

The full report of the survey on which this Spotlight is based is published as a SCRE Research Report entitled *A Review of Musical Instrument Instruction in Scotland*. It should be noted that the report was completed in January 1999, based on the results of a survey conducted in August and September 1998. This Spotlight contains some later information and discussion.

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